

DETERMINANTS AND IMPACT OF NON-REGISTRATION BIRTH ON THE CHILDREN IN CAMEROUN

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Abstract:

Register a birth is a first step to ensuring the identity of a child. Registration is evidence not only of identity but also of existence. In many countries it's considered like the main identification document. This paper studies issues relating to non-registration births on the children. Data used are from Third Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in Cameroon by the National Statistics Institute in 2006. This study presents a theoretical review on birth registration. Thereof, it appears that in several countries, a birth certificate is required to access to basic services and to exercise the fundamental human rights. Without a birth certificate, a child may be unable to pass school examinations, immunization or receive free health care. An adult without a birth certificate haven't the right to marry, to vote, to be employed in the formal sector, or even register the births of his children. To analyze the impact of non-registration of children birth in Cameroon, we identified firstly the constraints of birth registrations, using a dichotomous Logit model. Then, using propensity score matching, we showed the impact that non- registration birth may have on the children. It appears from this study that several factors can explain lack registration of births, like, place of residence, age of mother, size or income of household... Furthermore, children who didn't have a birth certification have a lower probability to go to the school, have a good health and have a good job in the future. Also, it's necessary to ameliorate the system of civil registration in ours countries.

Keywords: *registration birth, education, health care, security, children.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Register a birth is a necessary first step to ensuring the rights of a child. Registration is evidence not only of identity but also of existence. A birth certificate is a confirmation of nationality, place of birth and age of a child. In many countries it's considered like the main identification document. A birth certificate is required to access to basic services and to exercise the fundamental rights of man. Without a birth certificate, a child may not be able to pass school examinations, immunization or receive free health care. An adult without a birth certificate may not have the right to marry, to vote, to be employed in the formal sector, to obtain a passport to travel outside his country of birth, or to register the births of his children.

Moreover, birth registration is also important to the level of economic planning and Millennium Development Goals (MDG), especially MDG No.2 and 4, which are respectively, achieve universal primary education and reduce child mortality. Indeed, how is a decision maker could make a decision about the population of his country if he can't estimate the number of citizens living in this country? How can we conduct a program on the health of children less than 5 years if we do not know the number of children born on average per day?

Register the birth of a child is a primordial act, which absence could compromise the existence of child and even the different socio-economic policies taken by the Government.

We remark, unfortunately, in some parts of Cameroon, that this act which should be a reflex is still absent in many parents. In rural area where the phenomenon is more pronounced, many children don't exceed the primary level school, because from the CM2, they should do official exams, which requires a birth certificate. These children are thus forced to abandon their schooling, lack of birth certificate. This undermines the government's strategy, which is promoting education for all, and to improve the living conditions of populations.

Given this situation, the objective of this study is to determine firstly, the factors hindering birth registration of children in Cameroon, in order to propose adequate solutions to the Government for the improvement of civil registration system. In a second step, we analyze the impact of non-registration of birth on the children, particularly with regard to their education and access to health care programs free taken by the Government.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

What registration at birth?

This is the declaration of birth of a child, officially registered at some level by a particular branch of government. This is an official document attesting the permanent existence of the child. Ideally, birth registration must be part of an effective civil registration system which recognizes the existence of a person before the law, establishes family ties of the child and keeps track of major events the life of an individual from birth to his death, through his marriage.

What does it save?

The information on registration and birth certificates can vary by country, but they generally comprise, the place and date of birth, name of child, name of parents, witnesses, with the name and the signature of the registrar. Can also be included maternal age, weight and size of the child, gestational age. For that guarantee the rights of child to a name, to a nationality and knowledge of his parents, the registration must indicate at least the name and sex of the child, date and place of birth, name, address and nationality of the father and mother. Some countries, like Qatar, include also in the birth certificate, additional information on the immunization status, and issue an immunization card along with the birth certificate.

Birth registration and right of the child

Although the right of a child to an identity is exposed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991), each year, millions of children are not registered at birth. Without proof of citizenship through registration, children are struggling to enjoy other rights under the Convention, for example it may be that their parents may not have access to essential child health services, such as immunization programs. The right to education may be denied to a child, he may be excluded from enrollment in a class or take exams. If he is unable to prove its origins, an orphan may be denied the right to inherit land. By fleeing across borders in times of conflict, or tampered for money, it may be impossible for a child to find his family.

Growing up, a child may have difficulty obtaining an identity card, driving license or passport without proof of his identity. He may be unable to travel or work legally, and may be forced to

accept low-paid work, uncertain, or be involved in criminal activity. It may not have access to financial services. It may not be able to vote. It may not even be able to register the birth of his child. In this sense, the non-registration has direct consequences on the rights of children even as an adult.

For States, have a share of their population that is not officially registered as citizens, has important implications. They are unable to count accurately their population or predict trends such as increasing rates of births or deaths. This can cause the under-funding of local services, the unequal distribution of aid funding. States may be unable or unwilling to shoulder their responsibilities regarding unregistered children. In addition, governments ooze a vital income tax when young people are forced to work illegally or in the informal sector.

What makes the barriers to registration?

Registration cannot be considered important by the society as a whole, by a government which has serious economic difficulties, either by a country at war, or by families mainly concerned with their survival on a day-day. Its value is often neglected facing at the problems more immediate and tangible, forgetting its long term potential for solving these problems. Often, we see only a legal formality, with little relevance to the development of the child, including access to education and health. All this makes that the Government and local authorities support little the birth registration, which is not claimed by the general public is unaware of its value. The registration process is often too complex and bureaucratic, and legal framework is inadequate or nonexistent. Registration may be too costly for parents. In many countries, parents must pay for the registration or birth certificate. It is also possible that there are too many logistical hurdles, including, for people in remote areas.

III. ECONOMETRIC METHODOLOGY

The binary model: logit

The variable of interest is Y , the fact that the child was registered at birth or not. We have a sample size of 3407 children. For a child I , variable Y is:

$$y = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{If the child was registered at birth} \\ 0 & \text{if no} \end{cases}$$

Let (X_1, \dots, X_p) the set of explanatory variables for Y_i and $\beta^{(m)} = (\beta_0^{(m)}, \dots, \beta_p^{(m)})$, a vector of unknown parameters.

p is the number of explanatory variables and $k = p + 1$.

We want to explain $E(Y_i) = P()$ by:

$$X'_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p \beta_j X_{ij}$$

X' = X transposed

It also intends to look at the evolution of probabilities to have or not the child registered following a variation of an explanatory variable. Formally, we have $X_{ij} \rightarrow 1 + X_{ij}$ and

$$E(Y_i) \rightarrow \beta_j.$$

We must find a relation between Y_i and $X'_i \beta$

To find the link which connects Y_i and $X'_i \beta$, two approaches are proposed in the literature :

- The approach by the transformation method or method of Odds
- The approach by the method of latent variables

In our study, we use the approach by the transformation method or method of Odds.

Notion of Odds

Given any probability p between 0 and 1, called **Odds** the amount:

$$Odds = \frac{p}{1 - p}$$

Given two probabilities p_0 and p_1 between 0 and 1, called **Odds Ratio** the amount:

$$OR = \frac{p_1 / 1 - p_1}{p_0 / 1 - p_0}$$

Called **Relative Risk**, amount :

$$RR = \frac{p_1}{p_0}$$

If $p_0 \ll 1$ et $p_1 \ll 1$ then $RR = OR$.

If $RR > 1$: the risk of non-registration birth is greater in men than in women, for example.

Formally, the multinomial logit model can be written as follows:

$$Logit = \frac{Prob(Y_i = 1|X_i)}{1 - Prob(Y_i = 1|X_i)} = \beta_0 + \sum_{j=1}^p \beta_j X_{ij}$$

Or equivalently

$$Prob(Y_i|X_i) = \frac{\exp(X'_i \beta)}{1 - \exp(X'_i \beta)}$$

IV. RESULT

The results of MICS survey revealed that of 3407 children surveyed, only 618 birth certificates were presented by parents. For 1672 children, parents said that they have the birth certificates but they not shown, for cons, nearly 30% of children surveyed (1106 children) don't have birth certificate.

The reasons why children don't have birth certificates are different in Cameroon. Firstly, many parents, especially in rural areas, don't know that they must register children at the birth, secondly, the remoteness of vital center, the ignorance of the place of registration, the costs associated with registration, motivate some parents to not register their children at birth.

In addition, several factors determine the registration of a child at birth in the households surveyed. Place of residence, region, age, presence of the biological mother of the child in the household, age of the mother of the child at birth.

At birth few children are registered, it's from 4 years that most parents make birth certificates for their children, probably because this is the age when children start the school, and the birth certificate is required for enrollment, especially in urban areas. Between 0 and 3 years, many parents report having the birth certificates of their children, but do not show it.

Children living in rural areas are most affected by non-registration births. Indeed, nearly 50% of these children don't have birth certificates, while 85% of urban children have birth certificates. This discrepancy is probably due to the difficulty of access to registration centers in rural areas. This could also be explained by lack of financial means, as in Cameroon there is a deadline for announcing a birth, after that time, the establishment of the birth certificate is paid. Moreover, sensitization concentrate in urban and rural populations are often neglected. Policies are likely to increase awareness especially in rural areas and mechanisms exciting these populations.

V. CONCLUSION

The reasons why children are not registered can be complex, and barriers to registration appear at all levels of society. Centralization of registration services is an important factor for families - with remote offices in rural communities; families face a long journey and a loss of essential income to register their children. The lack of information, social and ethnic barriers, administration systems complex and economic pressures contribute also to low registration rates. States don't have perhaps the resources or infrastructure to support a system of effective civil registration of births, and the political volunteer to prioritize birth registration may be low. The data registrations aren't coordinated with other systems, such as health or social services, which means that the organization of services is much less effective than it could be.

These unregistered children are almost inevitably the children of poor and excluded. But the failure to register exacerbates their poverty and marginalization. If the birth registration is not in itself a guarantee of education, health, protection and participation, its absence can place these fundamental rights beyond the reach of those who are already on the margins of society.

But the interest of registration - or non-registration - of birth is not limited to the individual. In the absence of good vital registration systems, it is almost impossible to plan or implement effective development strategies. Unregistered children are often neglected in social development plans, because they don't appear in the data. They are completely invisible to those

who make policy decisions and resource issues. And without a proper registration of births, a country cannot even be certain of his birth rates or mortality.

Birth registration is an essential step for a good administration; it's a vital element in the establishment of democratic processes. It not only helps to ensure effective administration and bring the existence of children to the attention of policymakers, but it is official recognition of a new member of society, who can legitimately claim to all rights and all responsibilities of a full citizen.

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